

OPERATING HERITAGE AUSTRALIA

An informal association of representatives of organisations
caring for an incredibly rich and diverse collection of
Australia's cultural heritage



Did you know that?

- Over 300,000 dedicated people are actively involved
- There are 3,000 organisations across Australia
- Over \$2 billion is spent each year, 99% self-funded
- 3½ million visitors per year enjoy the experience

More people are actively involved in operating heritage than the opera, ballet, theatre or Rugby League!

All experience the same problems:

- Inappropriate regulations
- High cost of compliance & insurance
- Loss of critical knowledge & skills
- Export of significant items
- Need financial and business support

Operating Heritage Australia initiatives

- Improve recognition of operating heritage sector by governments and regulators
- Investigate training and licensing options
- Identify items of outstanding significance and/or at risk

This month's featured subject - Legislation

There is no protection under Australian Federal law for items of movable heritage while they remain in Australia.

The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act provides protection for landscapes, sites and buildings—but not movable heritage.

The Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986 controls the import and export of "significant" items of cultural heritage—but does not provide any protection while the item is in Australia.

State Heritage Acts provide a level of protection for all types of heritage although in practice:

- Some states' Heritage Acts don't recognise movable heritage for inclusion on the State Heritage Register
- Of the more than 12,000 items on State Heritage Registers, fewer than 100 are items of movable heritage

Operating Heritage Australia and **Engineers Australia** are actively campaigning for improved recognition and protection of movable and intangible heritage.

Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986

The image below shows a sample of items from the last year either illegally exported or threatened with export.



Clockwise from top left: GMH Archives; Ruston Proctor Traction Engine, Benz Sendling tractor; first Holden production racing car, Percival Gull, MacDonal tractor

Now, only items proven to be **significant** are protected from export (only 31 objects in 35 years).

Everything else can be exported unless enough evidence can be provided to show that the item is significant.

A Review of the Act in 2015 recommended improvements including a requirement that anyone wanting to export historical items must show that the item is not significant.

After six years and in spite of overwhelming support, the government has not implemented the changes.

Can you help?

If you know of any significant items under threat, phone the Cultural Property Section of the Department of the Arts on **1800 819 461** or by e-mail at **Movable.Heritage@arts.gov.au** and explain the situation. They will ensure that an Expert Examiner assesses the item.

It will help enormously if you can provide information demonstrating how the object is significant:

- The item's history
 - How it affected the community
 - Who was affected
- It's importance as an example of technical development
- How many of this model still exist – is it rare?
- If it is a representative example - authentic, complete?

Write to your local member demanding that the new PMCH Act be completed and implemented. Explain your organisation's contribution to the community and the need for better protection for our significant movable heritage

For more information suitable for your club please e-mail operatingheritageaustralia@gmail.com